

**Subpart B—Contracts****§ 1468.20 Application for CFO program participation.**

(a) Any eligible owner or producer within an approved pilot project area may submit an application for participation in the CFO to a service center or other USDA county or field office(s) of FSA or NRCS, where the pilot project area is located.

(b) CCC will accept applications throughout the fiscal year. CCC will rank and select the offers of applicants periodically, as determined appropriate by the State Conservationist. The application period will begin after a pilot project area has been approved.

(c) The designated conservationist, in consultation with the local work group, will develop ranking criteria to prioritize applications within a pilot project area which consists of more than one owner or producer. NRCS will prioritize applications from the same pilot project area using the criteria specific to the area. The FSA county committee, with the assistance of the designated conservationist and designated FSA official, will approve for funding the application in a pilot project area based on eligibility factors of the applicant and the NRCS ranking.

(d) The designated conservationist will work with the applicant to collect the information necessary to evaluate the application using the ranking criteria. An applicant has the option of offering and accepting less than the maximum program payments allowed, offering to apply more conservation practices to the land in order to increase the likelihood of being enrolled. In evaluating the applications, the designated conservationist will take into consideration the following factors:

- (1) Soil erosion;
- (2) Water quality;
- (3) Wildlife benefits;
- (4) Soil productivity;
- (5) Conservation compliance considerations;
- (6) Likelihood to remain in conserving uses beyond the contract period, including tree planting and permanent wildlife habitat;
- (7) State water quality priority areas;

(8) The environmental benefits per dollar expended; and

(9) The degree to which application is consistent with the pilot project proposal.

(e) If two or more applications have an equal rank, the application that will result in the least cost to the program will be given greater consideration.

**§ 1468.21 Contract requirements.**

(a) In order for an applicant to receive annual payments, the applicant must enter into a contract agreeing to implement a conservation farm plan. The FSA county committee, with NRCS concurrence, will use the NRCS ranking consistent with the provisions of § 1468.20 and grant final approval of the contract.

(b) A CFO contract will:

(1) Incorporate by reference all portions of a conservation farm plan applicable to CFO;

(2) Be for a duration of 10 years, and may be renewed, subject to the availability of funds, for a period not to exceed 5 years upon mutual agreement of CCC and the participant;

(3) Provide that the participant will:

(i) Not conduct any practices on the farm or ranch unit of concern consistent with the goals of the contract that would tend to defeat the purposes of the contract, or reduce net environmental and societal benefits;

(ii) Refund with interest any program payments received and forfeit any future payments under the program, on the violation of a term or condition of the contract, in accordance with the provisions of § 1468.25 of this part;

(iii) Refund all program payments received on the transfer of the right and interest of the producer in land subject to the contract, unless the transferee of the right and interest agrees to assume all obligations of the contract, in accordance with the provisions of § 1468.24 of this part;

(iv) Agree to forego participation in CRP, EQIP, and the cost-share agreements under WRP, along with future payments associated with these programs, with regard to the land under the CFO contract;

(v) Supply information as required by CCC to determine compliance with the